

Post-Academic Architecture

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Abstract

The perfection of architecture is displaced from the present to the past, and is dissolved in philosophical science. Architects are convinced their philological and analytical ability found problems to resolve only in the architecture of the past, often changeable with changes of taste, but nevertheless kept constant its aspiration toward universal aesthetic values. But to extricate themselves from the double yoke of classic architecture, historians sought afar, discovering folk works from the Far East. If it is true that current buildings are the present-day interpretation of the past, then present day architecture is the basis of all history of architecture. However, it is essential not to confuse architecture with the viewer's taste, because aesthetics cannot create systems of knowledge, such as logic, but can only supply models for judgment. These models are symbols conceived as works of art reduced to their simplest expression (belonging to representations of line, surface and volume), which depend on perceptions that are related to the sphere of thought and symbolic sympathy that assume external form as symbols of its existence.

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Introduction

Since civilization is but the individual writ large, all civilization constructs a precarious order imposed on seething disorder beneath. One is compelled to be alert, not merely to what humans perceive but also to what they do not perceive. The springs of action that are invisible are often more consequential than those that parade their power. Psychology is not the sole property of the private world where its authority is obviously commanding its forms on an essential part of the entire world from which historical causes emerge. It is active in culture and craft. Therefore, all history must be in significant measure psychohistory, in cause and effect, so that all historical explanation must include psychological elements. Most psycho-historians confine themselves to psychobiography. History is only the anatomy of unreason. But to restrict psychohistory to psychopathology is to turn back from a supreme opportunity. Human beings want to plunge into the past to grasp all existence with both hands. They need histories incorporating hopes and frustrations, anxieties and fantasies, obsession and regression, not segregating them. They need to know about the history of culture, its technology and its social structure, its play and its art.

Private motives and responses can never provide the explanation of an event because an event never wholly corresponds to the sum of individual intentions. There are many kinds of conservatism each of them enshrined behind the sheltering wall of habit and jealously guard against attack. In our modern world, industrialized, specialized and professionalized servants have become masters, which is to say, effects have become causes. Most men do not make their world, they find it. Most of what they think, feel, perceive, and do is no more than the unreflective reenactment of social habits and cultural stereotypes. The most innovative among them is indebted to materials that the past has provided for him. There is a cause for everything, but we may not always know it.

The Modernist Movement

The modernist movement was not a mistake, but its origins lie in grand misreading. The call for sincerity and originality was commonplace in nineteenth century art and architecture to foster a tradition of originality. Difficulties arose only when it became necessary to embody originality and not eccentricity in design. In our 21st century critics have seen the artist's emancipation from nature as indispensable in our modern sensibility, and turning our back on imitation; thus, participating in the making of modernism's meaning of simplicity to the way subjects are comprehended and depicted, and not ceaselessly depicting the past, but in the spectacle fashionable life.

Modernity lies here in the ephemeral, the fugitive, and the contingent. The architect must learn to look and forget what schools have drilled into him. The years of Walter Gropius and Piet Mondrian span decades in which exhilaration with the new did combat with regret for the old, by designs that are utopian, striving for clarity, and calling for a psychology which recognizes that mechanism as part of normal predictable behavior. We are enveloped and soaked in the atmosphere of the marveling, but we do not see it. The heroism of modern life will disclose itself to the open-eyed architect who sets up house in the heart of the multitude and contribute his bit to that immense dictionary of modern life. The architect marvels at the eternal beauty and the astonishing harmony of life in the nations. To the modern artist pure art is to create a suggestive magic containing at the same time the object and the subject, the world external to the artist.

Architecture responds to social pressures in the most visible way. Many seekers after shelter are admittedly undemanding as aesthetic illiterates. They restrict their fantasies to domestic memories of their childhood and are satisfied with duplicating the tastes of their parents. The previous decade saw an impassioned struggle for the soul of German design, and the German in return admired the English way of designing their domestic environment. As a result, overloading and false romanticism replaced good proportions and practical simplicity, and have, for all purposes, become the tendency of our 21st. century architecture while the road to the future lay in the intelligent application of prefabrication and standardization.

Art and Nature

The debate between expressionists and rationalists, between adversaries and advocates of the machine, between champions of the solitary genius, between ancients and moderns in fact was often a civil war in the soul of the designer. The rise of the machine and the emergence of mass production had raised complex problems to which only the simpleminded would offer a simple solution. For instance, the development from the genius of the Renaissance to the Baroque style is characterized by an increase of movement expressed, for instance, in the change from a circular to an elongated shape, from a square to a rectangle with a sense of direction, as well as the use of convergent and divergent shapes composed of curved contours and surfaces.

The relation of art to nature has always been problematic; Picasso has asked if anyone has ever seen a natural work of art. Nature and art, being two different things, cannot be the same thing. Art has always enjoyed a factitious immortality. Before the advent of modernism, symbols and signs were common cultural property, yet even in those days art constituted a moment of frozen history, refusing to age, while realistic art

intimated its distance from nature to all who would look. All art aspires towards the condition of music. Art is the path of ascension, away from matter. To take this path in art makes it necessary for the artist to eschew the portrayal of motion and activity.

In fact, art has become incomprehensible. It has been thought of as a means of interpreting the nature of life to human eyes. Now, what we are supposed to find in the art of the past no longer makes sense to us. Art had fallen into the danger of losing form by trying to become a mechanically corrected reproduction of nature. What we now call the sense of form is the capacity to furnish visible objects with properties, such as clarity, unity, harmony, and balance. Now form began to suffer disturbance, created by civilization, and man's natural sense of form is threatened. The formal devices used are submerged in the statement of the effect. Good form does not show. It is seen to dissolve into content to conform to the beholder's way of perceiving things, and finding himself concerned with shapes. Is it a device for escaping from the compelling call of art? What we need is interpretation capable of opening the eyes to the messages transmitted by form rather than shapes and ultimate reality. Perceiving means finding form in its structure. In this way it expresses harmony, dominance, contrast and similarity, movement and rest, equilibrium and so forth. Form is the representation of an object to make it pleasurable. Form is an indispensable prerequisite for the perceptual characterization of the content.

Order and Complexity

Order governs the relations among the parts of an entity. It derives from the overall theme to which the behavior of all parts must conform. Without order, the organs of the human body would work at loggerheads with each other, and the various functions and strivings of the mind would fight each other chaotically, and our senses could not function. The visible shape of an object must be clearly organized if we are to recognize, remember, and compare it with others. If the mind is unable to perceive and create order, man would not survive. Irrational shapes need not be disorderly. On the contrary, the rectangle of the golden section conveys to most observers the satisfying impression of being just right, balanced and harmonious. In architecture, many shapes and relations are rational while in painting rationality is an exception.

Complexity is the multiplicity of the relationships among the parts of a complex. Order and complexity are antagonistic. When one increases the complexity of an object, order will be harder to achieve. Order and complexity, however, cannot exist without each other. Complexity without order produces confusion, and order without complexity produces boredom. Order is needed, however, to cope with both the inner and outer world. Great designs combine high order with high complexity. In consequence, these produce different interpretations of nature. The historian is accustomed to distinguishing these seemingly opposing attitudes as the Classic and the Romantic. Landscape offers an escape from all-encompassing order. The highly defined irrationality of the Japanese garden presents a supreme universal order into which man can fit himself by sensing it and letting it emanate from himself. Rules and classifications are applicable, but they deal only with balance and structural similarities, not with exact measurement. These clearly man-made objects do not express the mastery of man over nature. This is a manifest confirmation of what the eye senses everywhere without being able to prove it. The highly rational garden pattern in the French tradition proclaims man's triumph over nature upon which he has

imposed his own kind of order, subjecting nature to quantitative rules and classifications.

The physical world, although magnificently organized by the law of nature, is supposed to present no such lawfulness to the eyes. The appearance of the world is shapeless, brought about by mental operations remote from the primary experience of perception, by memory, and perhaps by thinking. It is this that divides men into artistic natures and purely intellectual abstract natures. Visual organization that we experience in the world is determined by the nature of images impinging on the eyes. Since what we see as reality depends on what we expect to see, the effect of illusion is obtained when an image matches the preconceptions of the observer. Since the visual world, in and of itself, is taken to be shapeless some non-perceptual power must be doing the job of separating one object from the next, discovering similarities and differences, inferring generalities from individual instances, and establishing the character of any peculiar species or thing. Accordingly, we are supposed to own the world as we see it since we have the capacity of detaching ourselves from the reality of what we see dispersed in infinite complexity. Cassirer, for instance, speaks of the need to deliver the contents of sensory or intuitive experience from isolation in which they originally occur.

Architecture also belongs to tradition that is necessary to follow, not to imitate, because detachment from tradition would mean to fall back on crude natural capacity, and to imitate would mean to renounce the originality of genius. Architecture should be imagined according to peculiar original ideas of the human spirit. Negative appreciation for classical reason of Gothic architecture is not wholly abandoned. Architects substituted the beautiful works of antiquity, from which blind imitation tried to take the external forms, without the spirit which animates. Characteristic beauty is the root of beauty, but from the root one passes to the fruit of true beauty, which is the dominating essence of form, to the beauty of the mind, itself. For beauty to become a concept, universalized, and no longer individual, produces not only absolute beauty, but is also able to break its uniformity with diversity of expression. In consequence, the aim of architecture is to manifest the truth under the form of sensible representation. The aim of architecture is the expression of a general idea by means of forms, inorganic nature of masses proportioned and disposed according to the laws of geometry and mechanics. Its material forms can symbolize a mind, not contain it. The mind asks for more ideal forms, less material, a vaster field of representation, richer and more varied materials, an expression more lively and profound. Nature itself becomes more spiritualized, everywhere presenting a reflection of thought, an echo of feeling.

From Formlessness to Form

Architecture achieved the stature of true art only during two periods, the Greek and the Romanesque. The essence of architecture would thus be a progress from the formless to the formed. The formless, that is the material of art, is the original practical demand for enclosed and covered space. Form is not a pre-existing fact that must be impressed on the material. Sensible form has no existence outside the material, and it is the most coherent expression possible of the original practical need. The Greek stone temple has its origins in a wooden structure and is the highest architectural expression of those formal elements that originally expressed the practical requirements of wood construction. The Gothic displayed marvels of

structural ability but is not a coherent development and does not fulfill a functional requirement. The Romanesque style with its enclosed spaces covered by vaults is much superior to it. Here the shell is unified, there is no question of a vault punctuated by supports but a vault that rises from the very ground through the solid walls. Typically, the Romanesque style abandons columns for piers – These piers are pieces of wall left between interstices and their most perfect expression is the clustered pier because it is a direct continuation of the ribbed vault. The Romanesque style is echoed in Brunelleschi's and Michelangelo's domes, the latter completely frees itself of all ties with materiality to become pure form.

There is a need for unity of structure and decoration and the possibilities inherent in the new methods of construction for the use of space, as the dimension of feverish life of the machine age, to have beauty. It is a call to not confuse utilitarianism with what is an awareness of a historical actuality. Architecture is a matter of surfaces, masses and voids, so it is necessary to spatial conventions that determine the value of each element in relation to a preconceived image of space. The empirical data governing execution must be reduced to a system, reducing a factual situation to an abstract scheme and obscuring its historical awareness and ascendancy to intellectualism, to bridge the abyss between reality and ideality, not separated from morality, politics and religion, besides the ethical and social. Thus, the need for a history of a new architecture becomes apparent in terms of discoveries in structural methods of the development of form, and social change.

Conclusion

Modern architecture has been the object of tremendous ideological movement. Crystal Palace built in London and the Eiffel Tower in Paris are important affirmations of constructional honesty and seriousness in comparison with the eclectic and incoherent combining of historical styles that are usual in public buildings. Function enters the realm of art by way of visual expression. Adolf Loos asserted that architecture should be counted among the arts only to the minor extent to which it is concerned with tombs and monuments since the contamination of art and material purpose "profanes the highest". He was preceded by Schopenhauer who remarked that architecture, to the extent to which it fulfills practical purposes, cannot be called an art. This is because when architecture serves utility, it serves the will, that is, material needs rather than pure cognition. Separation of expression is evident in discussions of symbolism in architecture. Palladio, for instance, recommended that our temples be made round because a circle is the most proper figure to show unity, infinite essence, and uniformity.

The perfection of architecture is displaced from the present to the past, and is dissolved in philosophical science, because architects are convinced their philological and analytical ability found problems to resolve only in the architecture of the past, often changeable with changes of taste, but nevertheless kept constant its aspiration toward universal aesthetic values. But to extricate themselves from the double yoke of classic architecture, historians sought afar, discovering folk works from the Far East. If it is true that current buildings are the present-day interpretation of the past, then present day architecture is the basis of all history of architecture. However, it is essential not to confuse architecture with the viewer's taste, because aesthetics cannot create systems of knowledge, such as logic, but can only supply models for judgment. These models are symbols conceived as works of art reduced to their simplest

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